

Message Text

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SUBJECT: TEMPORARY STAFFING FOR CONSULAR PEAK SEASON

REF MEXICO 1993; MEXICO 9409

1. MEXICO 1993 REPORTED THE EMBASSY'S INTENTION OF ESTABLISHING AN EXPERIMENTAL PROGRAM TO SELECT AND TRAIN QUALIFIED DEPENDENTS FOR TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS AS AUXILIARY OFFICERS TO SERVE DURING PEAK WORK-LOAD SEASONS. THIS TELEGRAM SUMMARIZES MEXICO'S A-258 REPORTING ON THE EXPERIMENTAL PROGRAM AND OFFERING SUGGESTIONS FOR DEPT'S CONSIDERATION IN ADAPTING PROGRAM TO USE OF OTHER POSTS.

2. SELECTION AND TRAINING: CANDIDATES FOR PROGRAM WERE SELECTED COMPETITIVELY BY INTERVIEW BY SELECTION PANEL COMPOSED OF OFFICERS FROM CONSULAR ADMINISTRATIVE, AND POLITICAL SECTIONS. SELECTION PANEL LOOKED FOR CANDIDATES ABLE TO PERFORM ON PAR WITH JUNIOR OFFICERS, BUT NOT NECESSARILY BUDDING AMBASSADORS. QUALITIES SOUGHT INCLUDED INTELLIGENCE, MATURITY, ADAPTABILITY, GOOD JUDGEMENT, RESOURCEFULNESS, ABILITY TO DEAL WITH PUBLIC, AND ABILITY TO WORK UNDER STRESS. AMONG FIVE CANDIDATES SELECTED, TWO HELD M.A.'S, ONE A STRONG B.A., TWO HAD NO COLLEGE DEGREE BUT EVIDENCED THE PERSONAL QUALITIES SOUGHT. THREE CANDIDATES WERE FULLY UNCLASSIFIED

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QUALIFIED IN LANGUAGE, ONE HAD FSI RATING OF 2,2, ONE

WAS A BEGINNER. PREVIOUS JOB-RELATED EXPERIENCE INCLUDED WORK WITH A COUNSELING PROGRAM FOR DRUG ADDICTS, VOLUNTEER WORK AS PRISON VISITOR AND WITH REHABILITATION PROGRAM FOR EX-CONVICTS, LIBRARIAN, AND EXECUTIVE SECRETARY. TRAINING SUPPLIED WAS ON-THE-JOB TRAINING WORKING UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF COMMISSIONED OFFICER, SUPPLEMENTED BY SOME WRITTEN TRAINING MATERIALS AND DISCUSSION SESSIONS.

3. PERFORMANCE: FUNCTIONS OF AUXILIARY OFFICERS ON NIV LINE INCLUDED SCREENING DOCUMENTS, PRE-SCREENING APPLICANTS TO SELECT THOSE NEEDING INTERVIEWS, AND INTERVIEWING FOR ELIGIBILITY, AS WELL AS HANDLING CORRESPONDENCE AND APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED BY TRAVEL AGENCIES. FINAL DECISION ON VISA REFUSALS WAS REFERRED TO COMMISSIONED OFFICERS. AUXILIARY OFFICERS IN WELFARE AND PROTECTION BRANCH DRAFTED CORRESPONDENCE AND PROTEST NOTES, PREPARED STATISTICAL REPORTS, ORGANIZED VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES FOR PRISONERS, HANDLED WELFARE-WHEREABOUTS INQUIRIES AND CLIENTS. IN BOTH NIV AND CCS BRANCHES, AUXILIARY OFFICERS PERFORMED AT THE UPPER RANGE OF PERFORMANCES BY JUNIOR OFFICERS.

4. RESPONSE OF PARTICIPANTS: ALL PARTICIPANTS IN EXPERIMENT RESPONDED ENTHUSIASTICALLY. AUXILIARY OFFICERS APPRECIATED OPPORTUNITY FOR PROFESSIONAL LEVEL WORK, EVEN UNDER GRUELING CONDITIONS. CONSULAR OFFICERS WERE GRATEFUL FOR THE ADDITIONAL STAFF AND APPRECIATIVE OF THE ABILITIES BROUGHT BY AUXILIARY OFFICERS TO THE JOB. CONSENSUS AMONG CONSULAR OFFICERS AT POST WAS THAT PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS AND THE CAREER PRINCIPLE WERE NOT THREATENED BY USE OF QUALIFIED DEPENDENTS IN THIS MANNER, SO LONG AS THE SELECTION STANDARDS APPLIED IN THIS EXPERIMENTAL PROGRAM COULD BE MAINTAINED.

5. PROBLEM AREAS: MAJOR PROBLEM AREAS ENCOUNTERED CENTERED AROUND EXPERIMENTAL NATURE OF PROGRAM AND LACK OF GUIDANCE FROM DEPARTMENT ON SELECTION, TRAINING, UNCLASSIFIED

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AND SCOPE OF FUNCTIONS APPROPRIATE FOR AUXILIARY OFFICERS TO PERFORM. WHILE WE BELIEVE THAT OUR SELECTION OF CANDIDATES JUSTIFIED ITSELF BY THE RESULTS, WE WOULD HAVE FELT MORE CONFIDENT WITH SOME GUIDELINES FROM DEPARTMENT BASED UPON BEX EXPERIENCE, OR, PREFERABLY, DIRECT BEX PARTICIPATION IN SELECTION PROCESS. TRAINING ALSO COULD BE MUCH IMPROVED WITH GUIDELINES AND MATERIAL FROM FSI. (THIS APPLIES TO TRAINING OF

JUNIOR CONSULAR OFFICERS ACROSS-THE-BOARD, HOWEVER, NOT JUST TO AUXILIARY OFFICERS.) IN EXPANDED PROGRAM OF THIS TYPE, DEPARTMENT WOULD ALSO NEED TO ARRANGE SECURITY CLEARANCE FOR PARTICIPANTS, AND GIVE CONSIDERATION TO SOME SCHEME UNDER WHICH AUXILIARY OFFICERS COULD BE PROMOTED WITHIN A LIMITED SCALE, IN RECOGNITION OF PERFORMANCE AND GROWTH ON THE JOB.

6. CONCLUSIONS: EXPERIMENTAL PROGRAM WAS MORE SUCCESSFUL THAN WE HAD ANTICIPATED, IN THAT NONE OF THE CANDIDATES SELECTED PERFORMED AT LESS THAN THE AVERAGE JUNIOR CONSULAR OFFICER LEVEL, WHILE MOST WERE IN THE UPPER RANGE OF PERFORMANCE LEVELS. WE BELIEVE THE PROGRAM SHOULD BE EXPANDED, AS A PROMISING MEANS TO ALLEVIATE THE PROBLEM OF EXTREME FLUCTUATIONS IN CONSULAR WORKLOAD. HOWEVER, DEPARTMENT MUST DEVELOP CAREFUL GUIDANCE ON SELECTION AND TRAINING IF PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS ARE TO BE MAINTAINED. DEPARTMENT MUST ALSO REALIZE THAT TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS FOR DEPENDENTS IS A PALLIATIVE WHICH CAN PARTIALLY MEET SEASONAL WORKLOAD NEEDS - IT IS IN NO SENSE A SOLUTION FOR THE MUCH MORE SERIOUS PROBLEM OF THE CHRONIC AND GROWING WORLDWIDE SHORTAGE OF CAREER CONSULAR OFFICERS, AND THE FAILURE TO PROVIDE BALANCED CAREER OPPORTUNITIES THAT WILL ATTRACT AND HOLD THE QUALITY OF OFFICERS NEEDED TO HANDLE THE INCREASINGLY COMPLEX PROBLEMS OF CONSULAR WORK.

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